

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

159

given as a slave to a Bella Coola, he was treated as a guest." [567]
 Slaves were bartered between Bella Coola individuals as a [437]
 matter of course. Their value depended on sex, ability, and [435]
 industriousness, as well as on supply and demand. When there [437]
 was an over-supply, the value of a slave fell to twenty or thirty
 salmon, but whenever an owner found that someone wished
 to purchase a particular slave he endeavoured to raise the price.
 If a foreigner borrowed goods in Bella Coola he usually had to [426]
 leave a relative as pledge. Thus, not many years ago, a *Xixais*
 Indian, from near Ootsa Lake, borrowed goods from a Kim-
 squit man and left his son as pledge. The goods were not re-
 turned, so the son was sold as a slave to the people of Kitimat.

It was not uncommon for a Bella Coola to lose his freedom [525]
 by gambling. At *lehq* especially, a player who had exhausted [567]
 his goods not infrequently wagered his children, or in extreme
 cases, himself. If he lost, his children, or himself, became the
 property of the winner. Unless speedily repurchased by some
 relative, such slaves were usually sold or given away at the
 first opportunity to a member of a foreign tribe, since it was
 considered improper for a man to hold a member of his own [567]
 tribe in servitude. The same course of action was taken on [628]
 those rare occasions when one Bella Coola village fought [727]
 against its neighbour and prisoners were taken.

To the Bella Coola, who still consider a man's "power" in [554]
 the land as dependent to a considerable extent on his ancestral
 myth, a slave's greatest misfortune lay in the fact that he had [773]
 no ancestral home, and hence no rights.

"No slaves came to earth with the first people," they say.

A slave was a stranger in a strange land, unsupported by a
 chain of ancestors reaching back to the beginning of time. On [727]
 the whole, captives taken in war were better treated than other
 slaves since it was felt that such a misfortune might occur to
 anyone at any time. They were frequently ransomed by their

"This is said to be an ancient practice, due to the fact that several of the [773]
 forefathers of the Bella Coola came to earth in that region and were on friendly
 terms with the inhabitants. It is conceivable that this tradition may have refer-
 ence to the breaking away of the Bella Coola from the main Salish stock.

* 556 skill shown by those who assisted, as well as the generosity of
465 X, regulates the disbursements.

The following presents of money were given at a potlatch held about 1890, and were considered reasonable.

For painting two designs ²² on the front outside wall of the house	\$ 40.00
For the erection of four upright posts, supporting the walls and roof of the house	30.00
For each longitudinal beam with painting	20.00
For each cross-beam, without painting	10.00
For the planking of the side walls ²³	100.00
For painting the rear wall of house, which is also the outside wall of the back-room ²⁴	40.00

● [435] An average totem-pole would cost perhaps \$150, but the prices varied greatly with size, complexity of design, and skill displayed.

426 The next distribution is of goods to repay debts which X
* 556 has incurred at previous potlatches, that is, to return "investment presents" then received (I, p. 232). This is known as *lisdjut*, "repay," and the word is applied to all kinds of repayments, including revenge. One of a chief's difficulties is to remember his indebtedness. He may have been a guest at twenty potlatches, and at each has received presents varying in value, not only from different donors, but from other people associated with them. To keep these accurately in mind is hard but essential; and parents carefully train their children to do so.

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As previously mentioned, the Bella Coola have no fixed scale of interest on debts. Careful inquiries made on that point disclosed the idea to be entirely foreign. The greater the interest, the greater does the donor show himself to be. If, for example, X received an investment present of one hundred blankets from a Bella Bella chief ten years previously,

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²²When two are painted, that on the left of the central door on entering portrays X's father's crest, that on the right his mother's.

²³Four men would work together on this task.

²⁴Two men would work together at this, the choice of designs corresponding to those of the outside front.

FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE POTLATCH 255

of their occurrence in most ancestral myths.* There seems to be no mythological explanation for the casting of a copper into the fire after the passing of the representation of a deceased relative, but the desire of chiefs to use them at potlatches is the result of their use under similar circumstances by their ancestors. Some ancestral myths lack reference to coppers, but their use is common to all, whether or not embodied in such. It is said to be easier for a chief to acquire coppers if they had been used by his ancestors, but this is not essential.

When arranging for the appearance of a dead relative, the donor of a potlatch is careful either to possess a copper, or to be able to borrow one at the right moment. As soon as the masked figure has disappeared, the donor stands up, breaks or bends his copper, and throws it into the fire "to make bone for the deceased." No matter how valuable a copper may have been, it is now worthless; its value has been expended on the purpose for which it has just been employed. It lies unheeded in the flames, a valueless article belonging to no one.

At some convenient time, either hours or days later, any chief may remove the copper and give it to a poor man, only taking care to choose an individual who has not recently received one. It is said that the gift is "to patch his canoe." It is now the poor man's property, but it has no value, since no goods have been expended for it. The new owner straightens and repairs it, if necessary by riveting on the broken piece, thus making it ready for further use. The poor man may keep the copper for years, or it may be only a few weeks before some chief, preparing for a potlatch, offers, perhaps, \$30, for it. In the old days, values were computed in slaves, canoes, salmon, and other commodities, but now in dollars. If two chiefs should happen to want it, the poor man may haggle about the price, though in such a case the two rivals would probably agree amicably rather than lower their dignity by seeming to be interested in a matter of money. It is to the advantage of a

*Abalone shells and monophides are treasured for the same reason; the former are mentioned in several origin myths, the latter in two at least.

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* 556 chief to pay somewhat lavishly, since the value of the copper depends on the amount expended on it.

435 [497] The \$20 received by the poor man must not be casually spent. He is expected to invite the whole village to his house, otherwise he would never again be given a copper. The heralds call everyone to the house, the singers as usual being the first to arrive. They beat out the *kusiut* song of anyone, to which the owner dances; the songs are used one after another, until almost every member of the society has danced. *Susak* songs may then be used in the same way. Since the supernatural beings are not present, the rite has no religious significance; it is merely a social affair. At the close of the dancing, the poor man distributes food to all, equivalent in value to the money received. It is probable that poor men sometimes give away slightly less than they have received, although any noticeable laxity in this would be punished by the receipt of no further coppers. The recipient of a copper from a fire derives no direct gain from it, though it is to his indirect advantage, since a person who has given away food is likely to receive larger presents on future occasions than one who has not.

435 Meanwhile the chief owning the copper is unable to use it at his potlatch since the value, dependent on the goods expended for it, is only \$20, a sum so small that to use it would be insulting to his dead ancestor. There are several ways of increasing its value:

[532] (1) *By Painting*. Taking advantage of some ceremony when a number of people are present, the owner gives a carpenter \$10, for example, with a request that he paint on his copper a representation of the crest used by his, the owner's, first ancestor, when coming to this earth. Henceforth the value of the copper is \$30.

435 (2) *By Naming*. The Bella Coola say that among the Kwakiutl names are given to almost all coppers; in Bella Coola it is a rare practice. Occasionally, a chief creates a name for his copper and validates this by presents to all the

FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE POTLATCH 257

village at some ceremony, exactly as a child's name is conferred. Designations are chosen with respect to the appearance of the copper, or some incident connected with its history. Such a designation is *Quaixwas*, "Begrimed," applied to a copper thrown many times into the fire. If, for instance, \$50 be expended for a name, the value of a \$30 copper is henceforth \$80. 435 ●
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(3) *By Making Gifts.* The owner of a copper can increase its value by calling together the other chiefs of his village, and sometimes of adjacent ones as well. After the customary meal, the owner expounds the history of his possession, giving details of its value. Then he passes it to one of his guests, who, unless he wishes to insult his host, must hold it upright, that is, with the broad end uppermost. The owner gives it in turn to each of his guests. To validate the display, the owner must bestow gifts on all present, and the total value of these is added to the value of the copper. Such gifts are not strictly returnable, although it is customary for chiefs to show their generosity and prowess to their fellows by a later repayment with interest. 435
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By these means the original purchaser of a worthless copper can increase its value to such a point that it can be used at a potlatch. There is no established custom about this. Coppers are not as valuable in Bella Coola as, for instance, at Fort Rupert, and it is unlikely that any are ever worth more than \$300, and the average value is probably between \$150 and \$200. Considerable time is required to raise the value of a copper to this sum and the owner in many cases finds that he has all the other requirements before his copper is ready for use. In that case, he tries to buy another which has been raised to sufficient worth by its owner. Everyone knows the values of the different coppers in the community, and the intending purchaser calls his fellow-chiefs to his house and offers to buy one valued, for example, at \$150. If the owner consents to sell, he usually endeavours to get as much as possible, perhaps \$175. The sum is publicly paid and is henceforth the value of the copper, which is transmitted to the new 435
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435 owner with a statement of its history and the amount expended
 437 on it. The purchase of a copper is, therefore, a good business
 * 556 transaction, and it might be assumed that a chief with keen
 [171] commercial instinct would endeavour to acquire as many as
 [183] possible. This is said to be the case in Fort Rupert, but in
 Bella Coola public opinion is averse to the obtaining of coppers
 unless for use at potlatches. As every ambitious chief hopes
 to give potlatches, he can always claim that the acquisition of
 a copper is for this end, and that the sale of it is from a kindly
 desire to assist a fellow-chief who is nearer the desired goal
 than he himself. Consequently, the sale of coppers is tolerably
 common, and a chief is not considered to be mercenary unless
 he sells too frequently.

426 The intending donor of a potlatch can now proceed to the
 ceremony, secure in the possession of a copper worthy to be
 * 556 thrown on the fire after the passage of his deceased relative.
 In addition, he may own another copper of too small value for
 this purpose. As described in the last chapter, he repeatedly
 calls together the inhabitants of his own village to rites which
 he validates by the distribution of presents, and at which he
 also gives away investment presents. He may decide to use
 his second copper for this purpose. All investment presents,

[558] which are given only to men of standing in the community,
 must be repaid with interest unless the recipient is willing to
 decline in popular estimation; but when a gift of this kind
 consists of a copper, a return of 100 per cent is expected on the
 transaction. Bestowal of a copper in such circumstances is not
 spoken of as an investment present, *kolāmkusnām*, but as
*ānuṣop*⁴, which has the definite significance of something that
 must be returned with 100 per cent interest. If the value of
 the copper were \$25 before this bestowal, it is now \$50, since
 the new owner must repay this amount to the chief planning
 to give the potlatch. The new owner can use the copper in
 any way he desires; if he repays a previous indebtedness, he
 cancels \$50 by giving it; whereas if he bestows it as *ānuṣop*⁴,
 announcement is made that its value is \$50, and he expects to

FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE POTLATCH 259

receive \$100 in return. The last sum is now the value of the copper. This second bestowal may take place before the owner has paid the \$50 that he owes to the original possessor. There is no time limit to Bella Coola debts since it adds to the debtor's prestige to pay off his indebtedness, publicly of course, when his creditor is giving a ceremony of any kind. At every change in ownership announcement is made of the history of the copper and of its value at every stage of its existence. In this way the worth of a copper increases until it is fit to be thrown into the fire after the passing of a dead kinsman. When one that has been used as *ānuḡop'* is at last cast into the flames, and later rescued from them, it is customary for the new owner to use it once more as *ānuḡop'*. On the other hand, a copper that has been raised to value by the gift of a name, painting, and so forth, is normally again revalued in the same way when rescued from oblivion. There is no definite rule about this; it is only a tendency.

The value of a copper acquired from either a white man or a member of a foreign tribe is equivalent to its purchase price, and can be raised in any one of the ways employed for one that has been thrown into a fire.

In many cases the donor of a potlatch prefers not to be the actual possessor of a copper at the time of the entry of his deceased relative, though he always arranges to obtain one. When the masked figure has disappeared, the donor stands up and says:

"I have nothing to make bone for my ancestor. Chief So-and-so, please give me your copper."

The chief so called upon transmits the copper with a statement of its value and the recipient throws it into the fire. Nothing is said about repayment, but the transaction has been public and everyone realizes that the chief must repay with 100 per cent interest when the seller gives his next ceremony. In this way the donor is able to use a copper without having had to pay for it at an inconvenient time when he needs all his wealth to give to his foreign guests. A chief often sells a copper

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435 immediately before, or during the early stages of a potlatch, in order to receive goods immediately, but with the proviso that
 *556 it shall be returned to him for throwing into the fire. This
 [432] method has the advantage of providing the chief with goods
 [426] when required, and doubles the worth of the copper.

Coppers are not always rescued from the ashes and given to poor men. If one is still lying in the fire after several days, the donor of the potlatch removes it and fastens it to the
 [764] memorial-post over the grave of his deceased relative. It may be left there, or another chief wanting a copper may buy it from the donor and increase its value in the usual manner. Only a small price is paid in such circumstances, since the copper, having served its purpose, is practically valueless.

177 The Bella Coola state that in ancient times coppers were worth less than at present, and that the change in sentiment
 435 regarding them is due to Kwakiutl influence. All agree that
 *556 the value placed upon them at Fort Rupert and Alert Bay is greater than elsewhere on the coast. The Bella Coola believe that the Kwakiutl distribute presents in respect to their coppers and that their values mount to enormous sums when the gifts are returned. It is clear that the importance of coppers, like the potlatch and other elements of culture, has increased in recent years through the influence of the coastal tribes.

*556 It is almost impossible to define coppers in the nomenclature of economic theory. They are not mere articles of barter, since they have no practical use outside the ceremonies of chiefs. Nor are they standardized units of trade or currency, since each differs not only from all other coppers, but also at different periods. In a sense they serve as tokens of what has been expended; representations of them may be carved and painted on totem-poles where they serve as marks of the goods which the chief has given away, but this is only a minor consideration. A copper can perhaps best be described as an investment which can be applied only to one purpose, "the making of bone for a deceased" person. It grows more valuable at every transmission in accordance with the goods ex-

FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE POTLATCH 261

pended, so that it serves as a visible and tangible memorandum of the chief-like generosity of its owner. By means of these media, debts are passed from one individual to another without actual liquidation in goods; in fact, it is unlikely that the Bella Coola possess sufficient money to meet the sums represented by their coppers. 556* [435] [426]

PROFESSIONAL PREROGATIVES

The importance of prerogatives in the lives of the Bella Coola has already been noted in many connections. A man's name is his only because his ancestral family has the prerogative of using that designation; a *kusiut* dance can be performed only by an individual with the necessary prerogative; specific totem-pole designs, the portrayal of bird or animal on spoons, seats, house-posts, and other objects is a right dependent upon an ancestral prerogative; as is also the area on which a man can hunt or fish. The concept colours all Bella Coola life. Not only is a man's ceremonial life based on this principle, but on it depend his actions as chief, and the economic sources of his food-supply. No prerogative, even though it be the property of a man, is effective until validated by the distribution of presents. Much of a man's energy throughout life is expended on the validation and display of his prerogatives; most Bella Coola feuds are caused by the infringement of one individual on another's rights. 424 556* [532] [796] [431] [627] [578]

In addition to the various types already mentioned, there are a number of professional prerogatives on which depend a man's vocation. That of herald approximates this class, although the Bella Coola consider it rather as a right operative only during ceremonials. Professional prerogatives rest on the belief that a man's ability as a hunter, wood-worker, and so forth does not rest in his innate skill, but upon an inherited right which must be confirmed and validated by the distribution of presents. These can be given at any convenient time when the people have been called together, but, as it is to the man's advantage to have his right made known as widely 424 463 556*

*539 manner in which he had shielded them from the falling fish. *Sonxwādku* alone kept his original name.

When returning they made presents of abalone-shell⁴¹ to everyone they met, and reaching Kimsquit they made very valuable gifts to all the people. The four had been absent about six months, and as they approached their home the three elder brothers poked fun at *Ālusqox*, saying:

"You will find that your wife has gone to another husband while ours will be waiting for us."

They found the reverse to be true. *Ālusqox*'s wife alone had remained faithful to her absent husband; all the others had taken new consorts. The three fickle wives regretted what they had done as soon as they saw the wealth brought back by their former husbands but it was too late to change their course, so they were left lamenting. Many people were rather jealous of *Sonxwādku*'s success, but he distributed valuable presents to all. Soon after this the three brothers married new wives, refusing to take back their former ones, much as the latter desired it.

Another informant stated that the first settler at this village was a single man, *Swādku*, who brought a stone hammer as a present from *Ālquntām*.

ORIGIN MYTH OF *Nutsqwāl*⁴²

In the beginning of time *Ālquntām* sent down to the Dean River four brothers, *usuyuyus*, *Yēdlos*, *Spānbāitlnaix*, *Twalosdimut*, and their sister *Sximāna*. They brought with them a herald, *Nusqwalaix*, who was a kingfisher, and two men, *Xomisla* and *Qwalaixu*, who had the prerogative of dancing at weddings. The five came as black bears, and for a long time retained that form. *Yēdlos* carried with him from *Nusmā* a several moosehides, a stone axe, some dyed cedar-bark, sticks for making fire, and the prerogative of a *kuslut* dance. After tarrying a few days at their landing place, the party set out down the river, with *Nusqwalaix* flying in front as guide. He was a kingfisher at the time and used to make short flights with quivering wings, and then stop until his bear friends had caught up with him, exactly as those birds do at the present time when a canoe travels up a river. On reaching *Nutsqwāl*, "The Place of Many Spawning Sockeye Salmon," about a mile and a quarter from the mouth of the river, on the south-east side, they camped for the night.

⁴¹This was formerly valued very highly, both for its use as beads and ornaments, and because it had to be imported from a great distance.

⁴²Related by Jim Pollard.

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